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REVIEW

The sunflower forest. By William R. Jordan III. 2003. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA. 256 pp. $27.50. ISBN 0-520-23320-4.

In *The Sunflower Forest,* Bill Jordan provides a detailed exploration of the idea that restoration can serve as a way for humans to heal their relationship with nature. Jordan has presented the main ideas in this book elsewhere, through his editorials when he was editor of *Ecological Restoration* and a number of book chapters. In this book, he further develops these ideas drawing on a wealth of examples of restoration projects, as well as analogies ranging from Huckleberry Finn to Thoreau to the bible. A recurring theme in the book is the ecological fall of grace of humans through Adam and Eve's being banished from the Garden of Eden and the necessity of resolving this relationship.

Jordan begins the book by presenting his definition of restoration and offering an overview of the diversity of types of ecological restoration projects. He spends the next five chapters on a lengthy exploration of the "shameful" relationship that humans have had with nature. In the latter chapters of the book he extols the importance of restoration in atoning for this flawed human-nature relationship, emphasizing the importance of ritual in this healing process. As an example, Jordan writes (p. 172):

> "This is no doubt why the use of fire as a tool for restoring ecological communities . . . has often been controversial, fire being an archetypal emblem of destructive chaos. Yet like the epic floods, murders, and battles of myth, fire can prepare the way for renewal—a resurrection of the kind symbolized by the phoenix or, for the Christian, by the Pentecostal tongues of flame. There is a striking resonance here with classic modes of sacrifice, as Jerry Escher a restorationist in Tacoma, Washington, remarks: like the innocent victim of traditional sacrifice, the weeds and exotic plants the restorationist kills die for our sins. This may be painful, but we remind ourselves, the victim must be innocent because what is involved here is not a punishment for sin, but an acknowledgement of existential shame."

I agree with Jordan that restoration not only helps to conserve species and ecosystems but that restoration can also be an important transformative experience for those who participate. In a number of cases, however, Jordan carries his ideas too far. If a goal of restoration is build societal support, then imposing Christian symbolism will likely burn more bridges than it is meant to build. As an example, in his discussion of ritualizing nature, Jordan recounts an example of painting trees that were girdled to prevent them from encroaching a restored prairie; the painting served as a "sacrificial ritual—not only performing the shameful act but intensifying the shame by highlighting it." Moreover, he argues that restoration should develop into a performing art. Jordan (p. 177) in critiquing a Civilian Conservation Corps tree planting effort, says:

> "If . . . CCC enrollees had been recruited from local communities, and if the work had been ritualized, with project planners and crew supervisors calling in artists and ritualists, and taking their advice as seriously at that of the scientists and technical experts involved in the work, my guess is that the results would have been very different."

Certainly, restoration requires creativity, and local human community involvement in and support for restoration projects is essential to their success. But, in my opinion, developing restoration as a performing art in itself takes the focus away from the critical importance of basing restoration efforts on sound science.

Despite his overall optimistic view of the power of ecological restoration, in chapter 5 Jordan does recognize that some ecological changes may be irreversible even with restoration. As a restoration ecologist, I think it is essential that we are honest about our ability to restore ecosystems, so restoration does not become a substitute for conservation of less disturbed ecosystems. Jordan suggests that knowing which ecosystems or communities cannot be restored ('ecological Humpty Dumpties') will help us prioritize which ecosystems to conserve. I found this point a bit simplistic, since there are few if any "restored" ecosystems in which all species and functions have been restored successfully.

Restoration ecology is a value-laden process. As I emphasize to students in my Restoration Ecology classes, it is important that we recognize the ethical decisions we are making when we actively modify ecosystems in an effort to restore them. That said, I found it difficult to remain focused on the lengthy philosophical discussions in this book that have been covered more succinctly elsewhere (e.g., Jordan 1994, 2000). For most Madroño readers, I would recommend that they read one these shorter treatises. I should make the caveat that I am an ecologist who chooses to focus my research on learning about ecosystems in order to be able to improve restoration efforts, and not an environmental philosopher. This book may be of more interest

to those who spend more time engaging in philosophical inquiry. This book is definitely thought provoking and is a change from much of the ecological and environmental literature as it ultimately provides an upbeat view of the potential for humans to improve their relationship with nature. Jordan provides a powerful call to action for humans to not throw up our hands in despair over the ever mounting environmental degradation but to put our energy towards working to improve the situation and ourselves.

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Rupert Barneby Award

The New York Botanical Garden is pleased to announce that Karen Redden, currently a graduate student in the Department of Biological Sciences, George Washington University, Washington, D.C., is the recipient of the Rupert Barneby Award for the year 2004. Ms. Redden will be studying the systematics of a diverse group of legumes centered around *Dicymbe, Paloue, Paloveopsis, Heterostemon,* and *Elizabetha* that are concentrated in the Guiana Shield area.

The New York Botanical Garden now invites applications for the Rupert Barneby Award for the year 2005. The award of US $1,000.00 is to assist researchers to visit The New York Botanical Garden to study the rich collection of Leguminosae. Anyone interested in applying for the award should submit their curriculum vitae, a detailed letter describing the project for which the award is sought, and the names of 2–3 referees. Travel to the NYBG should be planned for sometime in the year 2005. The application should be addressed to Dr. James L. Luteyn, Institute of Systematic Botany, The New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Blvd., Bronx, NY 10458-5126, USA and received no later than December 1, 2004. Announcement of the recipient will be made by December 15th.

Anyone interested in making a contribution to THE RUPERT BARNEBY FUND IN LEGUME SYSTEMATICS, which supports this award, may send their check, payable to The New York Botanical Garden, to Dr. Luteyn.